

**TESTIMONY OF DELWYN HOLTHUSEN,**  
**member of the**  
**RED LAKE BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS**  
**before the**  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS HEARING ON**  
**AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES**  
**May 26, 1999**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Indian Affairs. Thank you for the honor of being invited to testify here today. My name is Delwyn E. Holthusen, Jr. I am an enrolled member of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa; we reside on our aboriginal homeland in what is now north central Minnesota. I am accompanied here today by my Tribal Chairman, Bobby Whitefeather.

I was told that your interest in having me testify is to hear from an American Indian youth about the issues which confront us. I have spent all my life on the Red Lake Reservation. I went to Elementary School in the village of Ponemah, the most traditional area of the reservation. I will be graduating from Red Lake High School on June 2, 1999, and I will be attending college at Minot State University this fall. My father has been a police officer, a logger and a fisherman. My mother is an organizer, and has worked for our tribal social services and for the Red Lake school district. My parents have supported me throughout my life and they taught me to dream. I have four sisters and one brother.

Toward the end of my elementary school days, I discovered basketball. I was selected to play on the varsity team while still an eighth grader, along with my classmate, Gerald Kingbird. We led our team to the sub-regional championship four times and into the State Tournament three times. When we played Wabasso, MN, in the 1997 semi-finals, our teams broke eleven state records for points scored.

I have been fortunate in having many opportunities to interact with my teammates in a sort of brotherhood which has eliminated any thought of gang-like behavior. As an American Indian, it has been good for me to get to know players of opposing teams and to be able to see them as individuals and not racial stereotypes. For the past two summers I have traveled with the Minnesota Select Team, which is comprised of the best high school basketball players in the state. This has been a real learning experience for me and given me the chance to make many new friends.

I have also been fortunate to be considered a leader by my peers, who have elected me to the Student Council throughout high school. There is a certain pressure in being seen as a role model, but it is something that I try to live up to. Being asked for my autograph by elementary school students makes me conscious that my example means something to them.

Along with this, I serve on the recently formed Youth Advisory Committee to the Red Lake Tribal Council. Consisting of twenty students from grades five through twelve, the Committee has been formed to advise the Tribal Council on matters of particular concern to young people. We are dealing with establishing incentives for various educational achievements now and will be working on a variety of other issues. This is a valuable way for us to learn about our own tribal operations and the government-to-government relationship between the tribes and the federal government. Whenever there have been major initiatives in our tribe there has been a deliberate effort to find out where the youth stand on the issues. We appreciate having this input.

I have also had the mentorship of my Tribal Chairman in getting me involved with national Indian politics through the National Congress of American Indians' youth track. I have attended several of these conferences as a youth representative of the Red Lake Band and have worked hard, along with other Native high school and college students from around the country, to organize the commission and represent the views of American Indian youth to the NCAI assembly.

It is encouraging to me that a committee such as yours is interested in the lives of American Indian youth. The world is becoming more and more complicated, as we see all the negative influences which are surrounding us. We need adults who are willing to deal with things as they are, not as they used to be. We need examples of morality and integrity to guide us. We need to know the strength of our culture and the values imparted through it. We need funding for activities and programs, not necessarily only for our recreation, but for positive outlets for our interests and talents. I have experienced the success that goes with athletics, but other talents need to be recognized as well. We need to be taught to give as well as to receive. We need excellence in education to ensure that we can compete in today's world. We need government at all levels whose policies are geared to strengthening families. Our tribes need support in accelerating economic development so that we have the option of staying on our homeland and being able to make a living, if we so choose.

My life has been blessed with all the support I have received from my parents, my family, my community and my tribe. Every person should have the benefit of being believed in and the challenge of having expectations to live up to. I have known for years that people expected me to do my best, and this has spurred my efforts. As an American Indian youth, I am proud of my heritage and will continue to keep the connections to the past as we move into the future. I have been taught to dream, and to do the work necessary to make those dreams come true. Thank you for your attention and for all your good work for American Indian youth.